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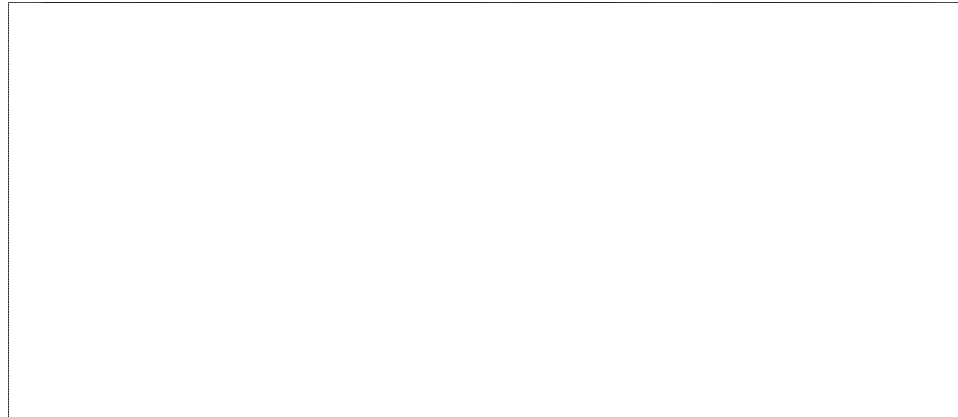
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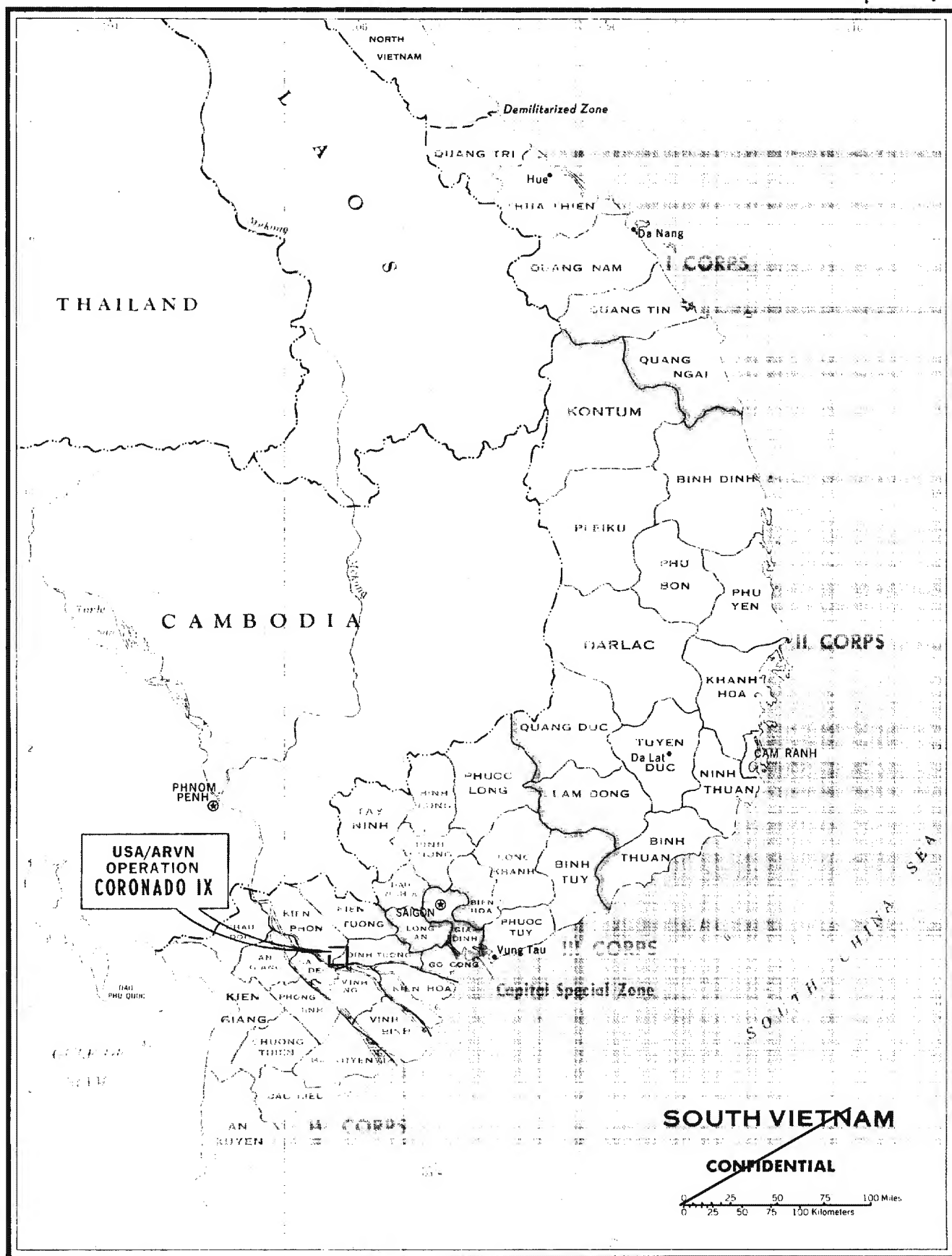
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~~TOP SECRET~~*Vietnam:

[North Vietnam: The Soviets seem to be mounting a concerted campaign to persuade the US to expand the projected holiday bombing pause of North Vietnam into an indefinite suspension of air attacks.]

[A Soviet diplomat in London told a US correspondent last week that he personally felt the Soviet Union could persuade Hanoi to enter negotiations if the US did not set a time limit on the pause. In addition, a Soviet Foreign Ministry official recently assured a Western ambassador that Hanoi would agree to talks within three weeks if the US would stop bombing.]

[Further Soviet approaches along this line are expected. Similar demarches were forthcoming from Moscow prior to the 1966 Christmas pause. There is no indication at this time that Moscow is acting at Hanoi's behest, although the North Vietnamese would doubtless welcome as lengthy a respite as possible.]

South Vietnam: First reports on Operation CORO-NADO IX indicate that 235 Viet Cong were killed in a day-long battle on 4 December in the Mekong Delta some 66 miles southwest of Saigon.

The recent upsurge of enemy activity in the Mekong Delta may well be part of a country-wide offensive aimed at demonstrating Communist military capabilities and at proving to the populace that South Vietnamese authorities are unable to provide effective security. Along with the threat from main force units in the central highlands, northern III Corps and the Demilitarized Zone, these small-scale activities help to tie down and spread out Allied units.

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